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ABSTRACT

This publication presents case studies of two sites--one with and one without a history of involvement in Workplace English Language and Literacy (WELL)-funded training programs. Case study 1, "Partnership, Flexibility, and Experience: Key Elements in Successful Training" (Jenny McGuirk), investigates a food processing company in New South Wales with an extended history of training and use of the WELL program. It reports that the following are important factors in successful program implementation: quality partnerships; flexibility in attitudes, training models and work conditions; experience in delivering workplace training and familiarity with competency-based curriculum and training packages; and qualified and experienced literacy and numeracy teachers. Case study 2, "Issues Arising in First Time Delivery of a WELL Training Program" (Loo Boothroyd, Kristine Highet), documents practices and issues arising in the first-time delivery of WELL-funded training in a large packaging company. It reports that major issues were the communication process; teachers knowledgeable about training packages; relationships; people to champion the WELL program; and value for the company. A conclusion compares factors identified as contributing to successful training outcomes and issues arising in training delivery in a new site and finds a positive relationship between long-term use of WELL programs and later successful training outcomes; a key factor in success is long-term investment in training; and absence of some successful factors identified in case study 1 led to difficulties. Appendixes include WELL materials. (YLB)

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Adult Literacy and Numeracy
Australian Research Consortium (ALNARC)

Key elements in successful training - a comparative study of two workplaces

Case Study 1:
PARTNERSHIP, FLEXIBILITY AND EXPERIENCE: KEY ELEMENTS IN SUCCESSFUL TRAINING
Jenny McGuirk

Case Study 2:
ISSUES ARISING IN FIRST TIME DELIVERY OF A WELL TRAINING PROGRAM
Loo Boothroyd and Kristine Highet

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> The supermarket chain which reduced its level of staff turnover recouped not only the lower costs associated with less recruitment activity to replace staff that leave but also retained the skills and knowledge of employees more effectively inside the organisation. ... Similarly, the reduction in workplace accidents at the chemicals company creates a safer and more productive working environment that will allow the company to realise more than the simple dollar benefit associated with the reduction in work cover costs. (Smith 2000:29)

This quote highlights the benefits that can result from positive workplace training experiences. It summarises some of the work done in four research projects funded by the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) which examined the question of returns to training investmentsThis present project reports similar positive outcomes found from 2 case studies conducted by the NSW Centre of the Adult Literacy and Numeracy Australian Research Consortium (ALNARC) in the latter half of 2000.

Background

In 1999 ALNARC was commissioned by the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA), through the Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs (DETYA), to research the impact of the inclusion of language, literacy and numeracy into training packages. The results of this research appear in a number of ALNARC publications listed elsewhere in this journal. It was clear from the work done in 1999 that more research was required in a number of areas. One of these areas included the relationship between Workplace English Language and Literacy (WELL) funded training programs and AQF (Australian Qualifications Framework) training (ALNARC 2000:4). The NSW project took the relationship between WELL funded training and training packages as a starting point for its 2000 investigation into factors considered successful in the implementation of training packages. Researchers worked from the hypothesis that workplaces with a history of WELL funding were more likely to experience successful outcomes in the implementation of

Training Packages than workplaces with no such training history. With this in mind the NSW project sought two case study sites — one with a history of involvement in WELL training and another beginning such training for the first time.

Case Study 1 investigates a workplace that has an extended history of training, in particular the use of the government funded Workplace English Language and Literacy (WELL) program. The RTO and worksite is in regional NSW, and the workplace is a food processing factory. By contrast the site of **Case Study 2** is a large metropolitan packaging company. While the RTO 's have experience in WELL delivery it was the first time they had worked with this industry or company. The company itself was engaging in formal training for the first time. Case Study 2 documents the practices and issues arising in the delivery of WELL funded training for the first time.

Training packages had been introduced in late 1997 as a crucial element in the Australian government's policy to streamline the training process under the National Training Framework. Since then 55 training packages have been endorsed by ANTA. They signify a major change in the way vocational education and training is funded and delivered in this country and have met with a variety of responses ranging from suspicion, confusion and scepticism on the part of some, to resignation, acceptance or enthusiasm by others.

CASE STUDY 1:
Partnership, Flexibility and Experience: Key elements in successful training

By Jenny McGuirk

Jenny McGuirk is the part-time coordinator of the NSW Centre for the Adult Literacy and Numeracy Australian Research Consortium (ALNARC) based at the University of Technology Sydney (UTS). She also teaches adult literacy and lectures in adult literacy at UTS. In 1999 she conducted research into the Certificate IV in Workplace Assessment and Training, also for ALNARC.

Abstract

This paper reports on findings from an investigation into factors that were considered important in the successful implementation of training packages in a particular workplace. It was thought that if factors leading to success could be identified and documented in a case study, then they could perhaps be replicated in other contexts. The findings revealed that quality partnerships are crucial, as is flexibility in attitudes, models of training and working conditions. Experience in delivering workplace training and familiarity with competency based curriculum and training packages is also critical. Even more significant however, is that the trainers are qualified and experienced literacy and numeracy teachers.(Please note that pseudonyms have been used throughout the paper to protect the anonymity of the respondents.)

Introduction

The NSW project focussed on what factors were considered to be important in the successful implementation of training packages in a particular workplace. Things to consider included the history of previous training programs (eg WELL funded programs), the transition to training packages, the models of training used, and the costs involved. The perspectives of various stakeholders were sought, namely, the Registered Training Organisation (RTO), the workplace, the trainer and the trainees.

An RTO in regional NSW was chosen because of its successful track record in delivering workplace programs. The researcher was aware that the RTO had

been working with training packages and, as well as customising various training packages in various workplaces, has published implementation guidelines for a particular training package (Administration). It should be stressed from the outset that the RTO employs trainers with postgraduate qualifications in literacy and numeracy and undertakes regular professional development. This became significant in terms of analysing reasons for the success of the training program.

The RTO in turn selected the particular workplace because it had worked with it for four years and could thus claim a 'history'. The workplace is a food processing factory which produces numerous well known brands of frozen food.

The particular training package under investigation is the Food Processing Industry training package which was endorsed by ANTA in 1998.

What was done

Semi-structured interviews were held with the Manager of the RTO (Bart), the trainer (Prue) and the Personnel Manager from the factory (Brenda). The interviews were audio-taped and notes were taken. The following questions were used as a basis for the discussion, but not strictly adhered to, as the conversation developed naturally.

- What is the history of training in the workplace (including models of training)?
- What do you consider are the success factors in the implementation of the training package?
- How do you measure the outcomes of the successful implementation of the training package?
- What costs are involved?

The first question about the history of training was designed as a lead-in, to get the interviewee/s talking about their training experiences. It became clear when intrerpreting the findings however, that having a history of training and the models of training used, were in fact key success factors in the implementation of the training package.

Originally it was envisaged that trainees would also be interviewed but this in the end proved not possible. Instead, the trainer developed a short questionnaire and distributed this to four trainees (Appendix I).

The manuals used in the training were also analysed. The manuals are 'in-house' publications, word processed not desktop published, and produced in loose-leaf, ring folders. They are virtually all written text, no graphics or diagrams and are written in a simple format, using clear language with lots of white space.

The workplace

The food processing factory employs 150-160 permanent people, and has a stable workforce, losing on average only one employee a month in an industry where a 10% turnover of personnel is considered normal. The factory has been open for over 20 years and most of the workforce has been there for over 10 years; 3 workers have been there for more than 20 years.

The training

The company has had varied experiences of training, including literacy and numeracy training. In 1993-1994 literacy and numeracy training was provided by another provider (not the RTO in this study). The funding required a $5000 cash and a $5000 in-kind contribution from the employer. Workers were taken off the line for two hours training at a time which was not efficient for the workplace (indeed, in one month $25,000 was spent in time off-line.) The company also had little say in what was being delivered. Brenda gave an example of some workers spending four hours off site with the workplace having little idea of what was being done which was considered unsatisfactory from the employer's point of view. The training/funding lasted 3 months.

The next experience of literacy and numeracy training, in 1996, was run in partnership with the current RTO. The company contracted the RTO to provide Certificate I in Food Processing and 180 workers were enrolled. Some of the 180 had not been in education for over 20 years and found the return to study stressful. WELL funding was used to provide literacy and numeracy support.

However, both the workplace and the RTO found the paperwork and reporting mechanisms for WELL funding unduly onerous. It was thought that WELL

funding was a good way to start literacy and numeracy training in a workplace, that it was a useful adjunct in industries with large numbers of people with literacy issues, but that the

> *bureaucracy was too much. It worked for what we did it for, but there was too much rigmarole attached to it. It was good for a start, but once through the wringer … no, not any more.* [Brenda]

> *[We] spent as much time reporting and administering it as doing it.* [Bart]

It is interesting to note that the RTO had been one of the largest providers in NSW of WELL funded programs but found that after the Certificate I level, organisations often needed a different type of support which could not be provided under the WELL guidelines. They consciously withdrew from seeking WELL funding about two years ago, preferring to contract directly with workplaces believing this provided more scope for customisation and flexibility. This suited the workplace as well, and they now pay the RTO directly for the contracted training.

The training for the Certificate I was face-to-face and assessments were done by demonstration and oral questioning. There was no need for people to write. In some instances they had to access certain information, for example job specification sheets, but it was sufficient for the trainee to know where the information was and to get someone to read it to them; they were not required to read the information themselves. This is in line with the literature that states that assessment should not be harder, or require greater literacy or numeracy skills, than the task being assessed.

This sort of training and assessment takes a lot longer than sitting the trainees down with an exam, but the learning is a lot more

> *cemented - we're now talking in a similar language.*
>
> (Brenda)

Workplace documents such as pay sheets were worked on in class and anyone requiring further help could make a time with the trainer for one-to-one support. However, trainees also made appointments with the trainer to prepare for assessments. There was no stigma attached to seeing the trainer as

there was no differentiation between content review for assessment purposes or literacy help.

I'm the only one who knew what they were going for.

(Prue)

Over time, self-paced booklets were also developed by the RTO to cover the bank of competencies that do not change much, such as Occupational Health and Safety (OH&S), Hazard ACP and quality which were referred to by Brenda as 'underpinning knowledge'.

24 workers were enrolled in the Certificate II in Food Processing which is presented in a self-paced handbook, organised in modules such as:

Routine Sampling Routine Testing
Quality Assurance B
Packaging
General Foods Material Preparation
General Foods Unit Preparation
General Foods Unit Operation

Typically these trainees have higher level duties and the content is more complex that at level I. Another 18 coordinators are enrolled in the Certificate III.

The trainer visits the factory once a week, 2 hours per shift. She works in various rooms, wanders around and talks to people, checking how they're going with their 'course'. They agree to meet her during their tea break if they need some help. She makes sure she has contact with each trainee at least every 2 weeks, often to keep them on track with their self-paced work:

Have you done anything? Come and we'll move it along a little bit.

(Prue)

The training, as can be seen from the preceding description, varies from one-to-one to small groups to self-paced booklets and assessment plays a major role. It is now time to look at the literacy and numeracy aspects of the training in more detail.

Literacy and numeracy

The literacy and numeracy demands on the workers vary, as do their skills. Some of the workers have little formal education, having left school when they were 12; they can write their name but have not done much other writing since leaving school.

At recruitment, applicants have to fill in quite a long form (15-20 items) including personal details, on site. Previously, according to Brenda, the Personnel Manager, some applicants have slipped through who did not have the literacy skills required to fill in this form and have therefore needed literacy training. The company assumes responsibility for training the people it has, which was done under a WELL program. However, recruitment practices now seek to ensure that applicants can read and write well enough to fill in the application form and to understand written and verbal instructions, particularly safety instructions. Evidence from other ALNARC research done in 1999 (McGuirk 2000:51) confirms that such screening out procedures are used in other companies as well.

In terms of the literacy and numeracy required for the job and for the training, approximately 20 to 30 of the 180 enrolled in the Certificate I in Food Processing needed some help with literacy and/or numeracy tasks. Some came regularly to see the trainer; others came only once or twice for confidence building. There were only a few who had considerable literacy problems. Only two of the 180 did not complete more than the core modules and chose to receive a statement rather than complete the full certificate. This training was considered more successful than previous literacy/numeracy training from the employer's point of view because it was 'on-the-job' and related directly to the job at hand.

> *The training at Certificate I level is very much kinetic - "Show me … What's good? What does it mean for your line?"* [Brenda]

It should be noted that workers with literacy and numeracy problems could also 'avoid' literacy and numeracy demands because of the way the workforce is organised in teams. Both the trainer, Prue, and the Personnel Manager, Brenda, commented on the use of team work:

> *Some on the line never do a certain job and the team accepts this and works around it; this person's never asked to write something on the board.* [Prue]

and

> *Most of the people in the team know who can or can't do something … like reading the spec. sheet … they ask someone; others support them; work with them; no embarrassment - got past that …* [Brenda]

A new computer system was introduced during the last 12 months for document control. Documents include work instructions, work assessments, hazard documents, line set ups, product information. 73 products are produced on 2 processing lines with a different configuration every night to make a different product. Previously this information had been in hard copy but documents often go missing or are not up to date. However, not everyone on the floor needs to access this information; this is done by a document controller and the literacy required is obviously considerable.

So, one can see that the literacy and numeracy demands on the workers vary greatly depending on the job that they are required to do. Workers came to the workplace with varying literacy and numeracy skills and are trained to do particular tasks within the broader context of teams and production targets. The results or outcomes of this training will be discussed in the next section of the paper.

Outcomes of the training

When thinking about the factors involved in the successful implementation of a training package, or in successful training, it is necessary to look at the criteria for measuring success. One obvious criterion is the difference that the training has made to the workplace, in other words the outcomes. Outcomes of training identified in this study can be summarised as increased productivity, a more adaptable and *'happy'* workforce and fewer and less severe workers' compensation claims.

According to the Personnel Manager, productivity improved as a result of the training and she gave the following example to demonstrate her claim: Central office dictated that training cease for four weeks and productivity fell. The

week classes started again, productivity increased, which appears to be due partially to an increase in morale:

> *This increase can be attributed to basic changes in the way that things are done on the production line. The plant has turned around and showed a profit last year; it's getting better and smarter and this is happening because the people are with you, better trained and more aware.* [Brenda]

The number of products being made has risen from 50 to 90 in 3 months.

Brenda explained that the changes on the production line grew out of a new contract which demanded higher standards of hygiene. More workers on each shift had to be trained to the higher quality standards and it was necessary for more workers on each shift to be able to operate the complex machinery so that the plant was fully operational at all times. Previously on the afternoon shift only 3 workers could operate the machinery, now there are 15 who can. The factory works a 9 hour day with a rostered day off every fortnight. This means that on any Monday or Friday, 25% of the regular staff are away. The Certificate I training has meant that there are enough trained people to cover workers being absent or on leave.

A further example of how adaptable the workplace has become was given. A chicken factory burnt down and (Brenda's) plant had to take over its production which involved a change of shifts (three 8 hour shifts, 6 and 7 days a week) and procedures. They did this successfully for 9 months. The workplace was described by Brenda as a *'happy'* workplace where change has occurred and new things are accepted, as they are introduced.

Another clearly demonstrable outcome is the improvement in OH&S with a decrease in the number of workers' compensation claims over the last 3-4 years. Previously such claims totalled 6% of the budget and are now down to 4.5%. (This also includes the claims from a now closed site that the company is still paying for). As well, the severity of the claims has decreased.

However, despite such positive outcomes, Brenda has to

> *fight for the training dollar; negotiate with other managers.*

Moving now from the management perspective to the workers' perspective, Prue, the trainer, observed that once the trainees found they could do one lot of

learning (the core modules) then they were keen to do more. They realised that the training meant they could do their job better, or more safely. They worked in groups and helped each other, particularly with OH&S and hygiene.

Prue also observed an increase in enthusiasm for the training. There was a change in attitude which moved from suspicion in the beginning - *'Why do we have to?'* to a totally different attitude where trainees came and talked about their projects, enjoyed what they were doing and appeared to be *'getting a lot out of it'*.

Prue also referred to instances of non-work related 'spin offs' as a result of the training, in terms of personal budgeting and banking.

When trainees (A, B, C, D) were asked what they had achieved from the training (Appendix I) their responses were also positive. The four who responded had all completed Certificate III in Food Processing and Certificate IV in Frontline Management in recent years. They said they had gained:

A *Confidence, knowing what you want to say*

B *Help with my work, more aware of situations*

C *General basic knowledge everyone should have*

D *Increased knowledge in positions held, better way to approach problems, better understanding of food processing*

Cost

Achieving the outcomes discussed above does not come without cost. The cost to the company has been considerable, approximately $1 million over 4 years. According to Brenda, $600,00 has been spent in *'cold, hard cash'* in the last year, as well as time and resources. However, the company has also made a profit during this time. Brenda acknowledges that training is a long term investment and that as well as new skills development, they are also aiming for *'cultural change'* which doesn't happen in 6 weeks.

The RTO also needs to estimate what a project may cost including the number of face-to-face hours. No one had customised a unit of competence for the Food Training Package before so it was a 'guesstimate'. What took one group with experience 6 hours of face-to-face training, took another group 2 days. Such

variations need to be costed in and what may be saved in some areas can be moved to other areas.

The cost to the trainees is in their time to complete self-paced booklets, as well as work time.

However, it should be noted that developing a training/learning culture requires a change in mindset from thinking that training is a cost, to seeing it as an investment. As noted in the ALNARC report which synthesised research done in 1999:

> *Much remains to be done to persuade employers of the value of working towards the development of a 'training culture' and acknowledging the central importance of involving employees at all levels with opportunities to gain new skills and knowledge. (ALNARC 2000:3)*

The workplace in this study appears to be working towards a 'training culture'.

What makes for successful training?

Given the positive impact of training on this workplace as outlined above, what factors can be identified that led to these successes? It appears from the data that a number of factors contributed to the successful implementation of the food processing training package in this workplace. These include the partnership or relationship between the workplace and the RTO, the history of experiences that the two parties bring to this partnership, their familiarity with competency based training and training packages and perhaps most importantly, the literacy and numeracy expertise of the RTO's trainers. Other factors which also appear to contribute to success include flexibility in attitudes, working conditions and in the models of training used.

Partnership

One of the most important success factors in the implementation of the training package was the relationship or partnership between the workplace and the RTO. This factor was stressed by both Brenda, the Personnel Manager of the workplace, and Bart, the RTO Manager. Features or aspects of the partnership that were highlighted by Brenda and Bart included the recognition of the contribution of all parties, the importance of democratic participation by all stakeholders and the importance of a factory induction for all trainers.

Both Bart and the Brenda stressed the importance of working together in a spirit of openness and flexibility:

> *neither knew what we were doing, but asked what we wanted and worked from there. **Don't tell me you know better than I do*** [her emphasis] [Brenda]

Similarly, Bart thought that it

> *works best with employers who accept the proposition that we don't know all the answers but we're the interpreters and form a linkage to national qualifications through the knowledge you have in the plant.*

He summarised the notion of partnership as:

> *We're partners in putting the learning process together.*

Brenda referred to previous training experiences where the training provider came in as 'expert' and gave the workplace little say in what training occurred. Such attitudes, along with an early union push which forced companies *'to do stuff … soured a number of companies about formalised workplace training.'*

A quick response time on the RTO's part, is also important in developing and maintaining the relationship with the workplace.

> *You need to get back to people within a day.* [Bart]

Most importantly, in Bart's opinion, was the importance of working to a training committee, not just to the Personnel or Human Resources Manager. This meant that the partnership was between senior members of management, the shop floor, engineering and the union. The RTO was not seen to be on one side or the other:

> *Yes we're a part of management's agenda to make things more efficient and a safer and better workplace, but that also means you're going to keep your jobs. We're not here to use assessments to sack people. We won't share that information. We're charting a line between the agendas to build mutual trust.* [Bart]

Another aspect of the partnership is the factory induction, including safety procedures, that all RTO trainers must go through to familiarise themselves with the workplace, to find out how the business works and to

> *get the feel and smell of the place. [Brenda]*

Familiarity with competency-based training

Both the Personnel Manager and the RTO were familiar with competency-based training and were used to selecting particular competencies to suit the job, so that the training package when it was introduced:

> *didn't come cold; it made our life easier … we had no trouble interpreting it; we were used to it, it made sense to us, was what we wanted.* [Brenda]

Brenda is a member of the NSW Food Industry Training Council and is familiar with much of the background to the training package. She saw the package as being more related to how jobs are done and what parts of jobs can gain course credits. However, she still saw the training package as being *'scholastically'* put together and what makes sense for the package developer or the trainer may not make sense for the workplace. The particular example she gave related to machinery operation where the training package says — 'start up, operate and shut down the machine'. However, in practice only a small group of people actually start up and shut down the machine:

> *If I've got 15-20 people on the line I'm not going to train all of them to start up and shut down, if only 3 of them actually do it. That's a waste of our time and resources. Therefore it's hard to agree with them* [training packages] *totally.* [Brenda]

In relation to credentials, it appears that trainees may only partly complete a certificate because the job does not require all the competencies as set out in the training package.

> *By doing this job I then get ticked off - 3 here, 5 there … There's some alignment with the certificate, but it's what the job does* [that's the key thing][Brenda]

The RTO was also familiar with training packages having had meetings with a team of industry trainers, looking at the implications and deciding that:

> *Training packages are easier* [than the previous national modules]— *they fit better with what we're doing. We were already using modules in the way training packages are meant to be used. We took them as a framework - looked at the learning outcomes, how can we customise this? So, then we look at the evidence guide, customise and choose the right mix of units.* [Bart]

Qualified literacy and numeracy teachers

A particular feature in this training context is the use of qualified, experienced literacy and numeracy teachers. The RTO trainers have post-graduate qualifications in adult language, literacy and numeracy, as well as Workplace Assessor certificates, and are familiar with identifying the literacy and numeracy requirements of particular jobs. They are also experienced in 'reading' training packages and identifying the underpinning literacy and numeracy skills required for certain competencies. This experience means that literacy and numeracy may appear 'invisible' at one level because the trainers identify it almost automatically. As one trainer said:

I don't think about literacy and numeracy.

She thinks about what the job, task or competency requires and the literacy and numeracy follow from this context. She integrates literacy and numeracy in a very seamless way into the training because of her expertise and awareness of literacy and numeracy. This awareness comes from post-graduate training and experience, not just the Certificate IV in Workplace Assessment and Training.

This literacy and numeracy expertise is also evident in the writing of the RTO's manuals where subject matter experts (Bachelor of Science (Food Technology), Associate Diploma in Food Control) work with the literacy and numeracy specialists to produce the learning manuals. The use of such a multi-skilled team appears to work well.

Flexibility

Flexibility was also mentioned by the interviewees as being an important factor in successful training and there are a number of aspects to it. There is the flexibility between the workplace and the RTO in their dealings with each other which has been mentioned already in terms of partnership, but there is also the flexibility required in terms of the mindset of the trainers, in their ability to customise curriculum, their ability to work at odd hours, in perhaps unfamiliar environments, and their ability to work in teams. The mode of delivery is also flexible to meet the needs of the job and the trainee.

In terms of working conditions, the RTO expects trainers to be available when required.

> *If they're not prepared to go out there at 1.00 am for a few hours assessment for the people who only work then, then you don't have the flexibility.* [Bart]

The trainer in this study is employed part-time for 21 hours a week which includes customising, writing and proofing materials, as well as face-to-face training and support of trainees. The work pattern is flexible and may vary from month to month. She may be working in at least three workplaces in any one week.

Another element of flexibility is in the design or customisation of the training to suit the needs of the workplace. The RTO and the workplace have worked together over the last four years customising national modules (which pre-dated training packages). The modules were considered by the Personnel Manager to be set up more for the training institution rather than the workplace but

> *We aimed it much more at the workplace, did a lot more work-based things than the modules dictated or were set up to do then it was very easy to go into training packages.* [Brenda]

However, not all units of the training package are relevant to a particular workplace. Sometimes a company may only want a few units from a training package; sometimes they want more on a particular subject, such as HACP, in which case the RTO adds to what is in the training package.

> *Provide what they need when they need it. This is much more likely to spark a learning culture.* [Bart]

The number of hours of training required also varies; it might take longer for one person, not so much for another. It does not have to take the same number of hours for everyone. This is where recognition of current competence is popular.

> *Show me you're competent … you might need some training, but if you're already competent you don't need the training …this is popular with industry because you're not taking them off the job for six hours for a month.* [Bart]

As well as customised curriculum and flexible working hours, the mode of delivery was also varied and flexible. Provision ranged from small group work, to one-to-one tuition to self-paced learning. Casuals are hired to work on the

line for 1 to 1.5 hours so that the trainees can work on their work-based project, for example the OH&S project which can't be done off-the-job.

The four trainees (A, B, C, D) who responded to the survey designed by the trainer (Appendix I) agreed that a mix of modes of training worked best for them, including:

A *Face to face or a combination*

B *Self paced with support*

C *Informal group training or support*

D *Face to face and self paced mixed*

However, when asked what changes they would suggest for future training one respondent said he would like:

D *Management on side – time off work to do the self-paced. Set timeframe from beginning, that management agrees to, and supports with time off line. Session at the beginning of each self paced unit, to introduce to content.* [the assumption being that the session at the beginning is a face-to-face one]

This appears to suggest that despite the employment of casuals not enough work time has been given to complete the self-paced aspect of the training. It also suggests that for this particular individual, management in general, could be more supportive.

Conclusion

It is clear from the data that successful workplace training and the successful implementation of training packages requires a strong, healthy partnership between the workplace and the RTO. This partnership is strengthened by the experience and history of both parties working together over a period of time. The duration of a training partnership appears to be a significant factor in the overall success of the training. A recurring theme from both partners was the need for openness and flexibility in their negotiations with each other and a willingness to try different ways of doing things to meet the needs of the job and the workers.

Given that the initial impetus for this research was the examination of the implementation of training packages, particularly in relation to generic skills

development and literacy and numeracy, it is intriguing that literacy and numeracy were not explicit concerns in most of the discussions about training. Digging a little deeper, it becomes clear that this is not because the RTO or the trainer/s were unconcerned with literacy and numeracy issues and how to integrate them into training. The reverse is closer to the truth. The RTO and the trainer/s are aware of, and have expertise in incorporating literacy and numeracy into workplace training. Their professionalism is grounded in well qualified, experienced trainers who have post-graduate qualifications in literacy and numeracy, as well as the obligatory Certificate IV in Workplace Assessment and Training. This case study adds further evidence to a study conducted in 1999 that found that the Certificate IV is not sufficient in itself to supply complex literacy and numeracy understandings, training and assessments (McGuirk 2000). Successful integration of literacy and numeracy into workplace training and training packages requires trainers with higher qualifications and experience in literacy and numeracy training.

The challenge for RTOs new to training packages and without a rich history and experience of workplace training, is to familiarise themselves with the training package, get to know the workplace, ask questions, be open and flexible in discussions with workplaces and not to pretend to be 'the expert'. There is an increasing number of resources available to aid in the implementation of training packages. We believe this case study shows in concrete terms what can be achieved through a successful training partnership.

Acknowledgements

Thanks to the RTO Manager, trainers and the Personnel Manager at the workplace for giving up their time to be interviewed.

Thanks also to Sheilagh Kelly and Betty Johnston for their help in earlier drafts of the manuscript.

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APPENDICES

Appendix I

Trainee questionnaire developed by the RTO trainer

Training Research

These questions are part of some research that is being done by ALNARC (UTS) about successful training in workplaces, especially training in the Training Packages.
Your answers will help the researchers to know what the people doing the training think about it.
Please add any comments you feel would be helpful, criticism, things you found helpful, your suggestions, whether you feel the training has been worthwhile.....the researchers want to hear from you.

1. What training have you done in the last few years?

A *Cert 3 Food processing and Cert 4 Front Line Management*
B *Cert 3 Food processing and Cert 3 Front Line Management*
C *Cert 3 Food processing and Cert 3 Front Line Management*
D *Cert 3 Food processing and Cert 3 Front Line Management*

2. What sort of training works best for you? (self-paced, face to face etc).

A *Face to face or a combination*
B *Self paced with support*
C *Informal group training or support*
D *Face to face and self paced mixed*

3. What have you got out of the training you've done in the last few years?

A *Confidence, knowing what you want to say*
B *Help with my work, More aware of situations*
C *General basic knowledge everyone should have*
D *increased knowledge in positions held, better way to approach problems, better understanding of food processing*

4. Is there any advice you'd give to someone planning a training program to take place here at [ ] in the future?

A *Take it off-site, this makes more people take responsibilities*
B *Recognition at the end that is appropriate to the course*
C *No*
D *management on side - time off work to do the self-paced. Set timeframe from beginning, that management agrees to, and supports with time off line. Session at the beginning of each self paced unit, to introduce to content.*

5. Anything else you'd like to say about the training you've done?

CASE STUDY 2
Issues Arising In First Time Delivery Of A WELL Training Program

It is a large packaging company (P.Co), one of Australia's twenty largest companies. The WELL program is at one of the NSW sites where there are 170 people employed directly in the manufacture of cartons.

Background to the WELL Application

In 1998 – 2000 The National Training Manager had developed a Learning System for the company where work skills had been mapped against the Printing and Graphic Arts Training Package and career pathways were outlined. P.Co had been liasing with the Printing and Graphic Arts Section in an inner city TAFE college, exploring potential partnerships so workers could get recognition for their skills through workplace training and assessment, then validation and certification by TAFE. It was during discussions with TAFE, when P.Co. was considering the difficulties some of their workers from non-English speaking backgrounds and others with weak literacy skills may experience, that the National Training Manager was informed about the WELL program. This was followed up by discussions with the Adult Literacy Officers at the local TAFE. The Training Manager then promoted the WELL program to P.Co.'s management as a way of assisting their workers, achieve specific competency standards.

Description of the program

The WELL Project was initiated from the national office of P.Co in Melbourne and it was important for the TAFE literacy teachers to establish rapport with the managers, supervisors and workers at the NSW site once the funding had been approved. Several meetings with the National Training Manger, the Manufacturing Manager, the supervisor of the Finishing Section and a senior operator took place to discuss how the program could be introduced at the worksite. This group of people, including the two TAFE teachers, became the WELL Consultative Group

The WELL program was introduced to the workers by the TAFE teachers making short presentations to the Joint Consultative Committee and then to

four group of 6-10 workers from the Finishing Section. Information sheets (*Appendix 1*) were also distributed, explaining the background to the project and providing details of how workers could join the program. It had been agreed that the Finishing Section be targeted first as the majority of workers were from non-English speaking backgrounds and should benefit from workplace language assistance.

Participation in workplace language and literacy training was entirely voluntary and workers were informed it would need to take place outside of their work time. This would ensure the operation of the machines was not interrupted over the 3 shifts, a key point in their Enterprise Agreement. Thus training was set up on 3 days, with training commencing prior to one shift starting and following the completion of another, to make it more convenient for workers to come in early or stay late after shift.

Prior to any training commencing it was necessary to carry out an Initial Training Needs Analysis. Workers who volunteered for training were interviewed individually for approximately 20 minutes *(Appendix 2)*. A total of 25 people volunteered. Background information was collected, workers provided a self-assessment of their training needs and they were each asked to read a workplace notice on "Near Miss reporting" and verbally answer some questions. They were then asked to write a short paragraph (2-3 lines) on one of 3 suggested topics, eg: a request for leave or what you did on the weekend.

In negotiations with the WELL Consultative Group, it was that a Pilot Program would be delivered or 7 weeks and the outcomes, issues and areas for further training would be reported. At this stage the problem was seen to be at the worker level and the focus was on those who volunteered for training. The overall potential of the WELL program is often difficult for organisations to grasp, particularly the potential breadth of the program in integrating language and literacy into all aspects of their work and communications. A pilot program provides everyone with the opportunity to have a tester, to try out the training. In a pilot the workers only need to make a short-term commitment, and the TAFE teachers can come to grips with the day-to-day content of the communications in the company and get to know some of the company personnel. At the end of a pilot program the TAFE teachers can talk with the WELL Consultative Group about specific, spoken and written communication

that is relevant to P.Co, rather than talking about communication in broader, generic terms.

At the start of the WELL pilot program the Training Package was still in its developmental stage. The company was keen for five of their supervisors to gain the Workplace Assessor Certificate and this was incorporated into the WELL Application. Two supervisors had been trained, but had yet to complete their assessment task. It was agreed that one of the TAFE teachers would coach them through the assessment task on a one–to-one basis. The other three would be trained and coached through the assessment task.

The teaching content of the Pilot Program was determined by workers' requests and included both spoken and written communication. The broad topic was Occupational Health and Safety and the focus was accident reports, both verbal and written. Within that context, workers wanted to focus on pronunciation, grammar, learning new vocabulary and spelling. Handwriting was also an issue for some workers whose first language is written in an entirely different script, along with learning the English alphabet. There was also an interest in developing a better understanding of Australian colloquial speech as most of the supervisors and managers are Australians from English speaking backgrounds. The majority of workers said they had little opportunity to talk English, as they mixed primarily among their own language group, even at work in the canteen.

The outcome of the Pilot Program for the workers was very positive, being demonstrated by: an 80% attendance rate; an increase in class discussion and questioning; more confidence communicating on the factory floor; small improvements in writing, (eg: filling in the Quality Check form) and, particularly, improvement for those who were able to do follow-up work at home. Participants completed an evaluation of the program *(Appendix 3)* and all wanted to continue attending classes for the next term, with the majority saying they would come twice a week if classes were provided. The outcomes for the TAFE teachers were: a better understanding of the P.Co. culture, the needs of different personnel and training possibilities.

Issues arising

There were a number of issues, which came up during the different phases of initiating and setting up the WELL program at P.Co. They were similar to the issues which have come up for many organisations where they have identified there is a problem with communication but they don't really know how to address it. The communication problem is laid at the feet of workers who appear to have a language or literacy deficit. These workers are usually from non English-speaking backgrounds and occasionally are English-speaking workers who have literacy difficulties. It is usually anticipated that the language and literacy teachers, the "experts", will be able to teach them sufficiently to overcome their problems.

There was little discussion in the initial stage of whether the problem was actually well defined and the TAFE teachers had little input into the process that determined the parameters of the program. Some of the parameters included: whether classes were held in work time or the worker's own time; training days; who would be in the classes; what section was to be targeted; where classes were to be held. Nor was there any clear discussion of what workers were expected to achieve by being in class. It was very open-ended.

The key issue was to establish a framework where everyone involved in the program, the management, supervisors, workers and TAFE teachers could have an on-going dialogue about the communication process and broaden the training from the rather narrow view of teaching the workers English. At P.Co. the Pilot Program, set up by the TAFE teachers in consultation with the WELL Consulting Group, provided the initial framework. There was a way of getting to know one another and gaining a better understanding of the company.

The TAFE teachers needed to gain credibility with the managers and supervisor on site, by providing guidance in setting up a training program, by demonstrating their expertise in the field of language, literacy and communication and by maintaining the interest of the workers in training. Credibility is essential for establishing relationships.

It was during the Initial Training Needs Analysis and the Pilot Program that broader communication issues emerged, in particular, the spoken and written communication from managers to workers and how that impacted on the

workers' comprehension of information. It became apparent from the initial interviews that 80% of the participants did not understand the term "near miss", nor what management required them to do in the memo on "Near Miss Reporting" *(See Appendix 2)*. The instruction in the memo was obscured by the use of very formal language. This kind of concrete feedback was given to the General Manager who then acknowledged the need for Plain English training.

Following this discussion there was an exploration of issues relating to spoken communication which had arisen during the training sessions. A very simple 3 minute segment from the TV show "Neighbours" was shown in one of the training sessions to two difference groups as a way of looking at everyday Australian speech. None of the seven workers could understand what was said. The reason given initially was the speed with which people spoke. However, when we analysed the content of the script, it was the use of colloquialisms that was also confusing. This highlighted the need for English-speaking supervisors to have training in communicating with workers from non-English speaking backgrounds. From experience there are other common errors in spoken instructions which include poor sequencing and the use of the double negative.

While the Pilot Program was seen by everyone involved as successful, it was still very much the early days and the Manufacturing Manager was not entirely convinced of its value to the company and to production. He commented that he would like to see some quantifiable outcomes. This issue has become the beginning of an on-going dialogue where the TAFE teachers and the managers are seeking a way of setting some more measurable targets.

Summary of major issues for the project

- Communication process. Understanding the complexity of the communication process within the workplace context, and at a management and teacher level "making the unconscious conscious". Teachers have a key role in the process of guiding management to explore their own role in communication as well as exploring other issues, such as the cultural overlay to some of the workplace communication difficulties.

- Training Packages. The need for language and literacy teachers to be knowledgeable about Training Packages and how industry competencies

can be recognised in the workplace through Workplace Assessment. The WELL program can assist in delivering Workplace Assessment training, enhancing the understanding of language and literacy issues affecting assessment, and, where appropriate, assist with ensuring the documentation is written in Plain English.

- Establishing relationships. The need for the literacy teachers to develop an understanding of the different roles of significant personnel in the workplace, to gain some understanding of the different personalities and their agendas and to be aware of how all of these things may impact on the delivery of the WELL program. It is important to be able to establish relationships with workers at all levels in the company, by asking questions, listening and exploring opportunities for language and literacy to be integrated into different workplace activities.

- Champions. The essential role of WELL program "champions" in the workplace in implementing and maintaining the program. At P.Co. there were 2 people in particular who ensured the initial success of the program. They were the National Training Manager at the senior level and the Section Supervisor at the ground level. The person at ground level is particularly important on a day to day basis, as he/she will ensure workers are kept informed and organise things to facilitate their participation.

- Value for the company. Managers need to see value for money. Time and effort is an investment and managers like to see quantifiable outcomes, as: time saved, mistakes and wastage reduced, increased production, reduced number of accidents and sick leave. Increased worker morale has most value when it transfers to one of the above. However, in order for companies to see some of these quantifiable outcomes they need to be able to analyse where their problems are occurring and with the assistance of the literacy teachers, analyse the spoken and written communication aspects of the situation. It is then that communication training can target specific issues with specific people.

Some issues arising for part-time enterprise-based teachers

Time

Time for things other than teaching is a critical factor in the good running of a workplace program. Teachers must be very well prepared, perhaps more so than for teaching in a college. Teachers who are inexperienced in workplace teaching will need time to discuss issues that may arise before they go into the workplace. All teachers involved will need regular time set aside during the course of the program to debrief, reflect and evaluate.

Isolation

Workplace teaching can be a very isolating experience. Teachers often have no peer present on site at the same time. Part-time teachers are often the people doing the workplace teaching and they may have little or no work back at the college. Their opportunities for talking with other teachers can be very limited. Even the brief meeting around the photocopier back at the college begins to look not just wonderful, but absolutely necessary. The issue of the attendance of part-time teachers at regular staff meetings becomes important to ensure some form of contact is maintained with the college section.

Preparation

Workplace teaching means that the teachers must be extremely well prepared. Worker's time is short and the time for the program may be limited. If a planned activity doesn't work, the teacher cannot go to the staff room or drawer for a substitute. Access to a photocopier may be limited. Room changes can occur at any time and this may mean that the video or the overhead projector or some other piece of equipment in the room will not be available for use that day. If the lesson was organised around using that equipment the teacher must have a substitute lesson ready.

Changing roles

The role of the teacher in the workplace seems to change constantly. Understanding and responding appropriately to workplace culture often places us in the role of anthropologist/detective. The teacher must be able to relate to workplace staff at all levels from General Manager to cleaner to canteen manager. This can often be confusing and can seem to make simple, everyday activities need a great deal of thought. Where should the teacher

make a cup of tea? Which toilet should she/he use? How does she/he move authentically between the different levels of staff?

Summary

As noted earlier the issues arising in the delivery of this WELL program are similar to those that have been documented by a number of organisations over the years that WELL programs have been in existence. What makes these findings of particular interest in the context of ALNARC's research objectives is that they provide an illuminating contrast to the findings of Case Study 1. A comparative analysis of the two case study sites is made in the conclusion.

CONCLUSIONS

As stated in the Introduction, the NSW ALNARC project took the relationship between WELL funded training and training packages as a starting point for investigating factors considered successful in the implementation of training packages. A comparison of the factors identified as contributing to successful training outcomes in Case Study site 1 and the issues arising in the training delivery of Case Study site 2 underscores the positive relationship between long term use of WELL programs and later successful implementation of Training Packages. The comparison also highlights a number of other factors that make for successful training outcomes particularly in situations where language/literacy skill development is an issue. Centrally this project concludes that a key factor in success appears to be long term investment in training as opposed to short term. While it must be acknowledged that this is a case study of two sites only we suggest that the findings provide insight and guidance to all those responsible for training, particularly in contexts where language and literacy skill development is involved.

In Case Study 1 the data indicated that successful factors included:

i) an ongoing working partnership between the workplace and the RTO

ii) a history of involvement in training by both parties – ie. the RTO's trainers and workplace

iii) familiarity with competency based training and training packages by both parties

iv) literacy and numeracy expertise of the RTO's trainers

v) flexibility of attitudes, working conditions and models of training used

A close examination of the issues needing resolution that were identified in Case Study site 2 suggests that is was precisely the absence of some of the above factors that led to difficulties. With reference to an ongoing working partnership (i above), the researchers at site 2 reported that there was too little discussion about the parameters of the training needs and that the WELL

teachers had minimal input into the process that determined the program. The parties ie. the RTO's, company management and workers did not negotiate clearly identified outcomes that they were seeking. Hence while the outcome of the pilot program was rated positively by the workers the Manufacturing Manager reported that he would like to see more quantifiable outcomes. The trainer/researchers were frustrated by such different evaluations and emphasised the need for all parties to be involved in identifying specific targets for training.

This Manager's desire to achieve more measurable outcomes also indicates an unrealistic time frame – after all the entire program was only 7 weeks duration. Case Study site 1 reported longer term benefits such as reduced workers compensation claims over a 3- 4 year period, a cultural change in that workers were more willing to continue undertaking training and finally that the manager was able to describe a 'happy' workforce willing to 'accept new things'.

With reference to iii) and iv) above the trainer/researchers reiterated the necessity for trainers to have familiarity with training packages and to know the workplace. While they were literacy and numeracy 'experts' they were new to this industry and to this workplace and recognised the need to develop such knowledge. Similarly the work place personnel had not engaged in any training of this nature.

In their summary of issues arising, the trainer/researchers claim that the need to establish 'relationships with workers at all levels in the company' is paramount. They further state the need for what they call 'WELL program champions' in the workplace. What they mean is that for a training program to be successful it needs the ongoing backing of all parties – not outsiders coming in to 'fix things up'. The good working relationship between RTO's and workplace personnel was stressed as perhaps the most critical factor in the success in Case Study site 1. The following words of the Personnel Manager and RTO Manager in site 1, describing essential aspects of partnership, encapsulate a key finding or conclusion to be drawn from this brief comparison of the two sites - namely that successful training requires ongoin g commitment and participation from all parties who bring knowledge and

expertise to a training program. This key element of success as rated by the participants at site 1 was observed as a key difficulty at site 2.

'the recognition of the contribution of all parties, the importance of democratic participation by all stakeholders and the importance of factory training for all trainers '

APPENDICIES

Appendix 1

Workplace English Language & Literacy (WELL)

What is the aim of WELL?

To provide workers with English language and literacy skills to help them meet their work and training needs. This is done by integrating language and literacy with vocational (work /career) training.

Background to WELL

It is a national program which has been running for nearly 10 years. Language and literacy teachers have been employed by organisations in every industry, including:- food, manufacturing, mining, community services & health, tourism etc.

Benefits to organisation:

- Improvement in workplace communication, e.g. employees are more confident in their written and spoken communication
- Improvement in written and spoken communication saves time for both workers and supervisors
- Improvement in teamwork and participation in meetings
- Employees gain industry competencies which means the company has more qualified workers who can have a career pathway in this industry
- Supervisors and managers gain more skills in writing in Plain English, coaching and training for a multicultural workforce

Benefits to employees:

1) Improvement in communicating in these areas:

- understanding verbal instructions
- communicating clearly with other team members

- completing workplace forms and other written work, eg: tally sheets, Quality Control sheets, time sheets, maintenance sheets
- reporting problems in writing
- writing short messages
- writing minutes of meetings
- calculating quantities and volumes

2) Often the greatest benefit is an increase in confidence to communicate. Most employees find that the WELL program helps them to improve their English communication skills in all areas, at home and socially, as well as in the workplace.

3) Prepares employees for further training if they wish to take it on.

Training in your industry:

The Printing and Graphic Arts Industry have developed qualifications from a basic level (eg: Certificate 2) through to a higher level (Certificate 4, or a Diploma).

These certificates are made up of industry competencies (skills), many of which most employees already have because they are skills they use in their jobs on a daily basis, e.g: Maintain Work Area; Prepare Machine for Operation

TAFE teachers:

Loo Boothroyd (ph: 9335 2343), Kristine Highet

Appendix 2

Workplace English Language and Literacy

Initial Interview / Needs Analysis

First Name : ..... **Surname:** .....

Male / Female ..... **Date of birth**: .....

Country of birth: ..... **Length of time in Australia:** .....

Languages spoken: **L1**..... **L2** .....

Education: (tick) **School**: Primary Yr 7-9 Yr 10 Yr 12

Post school: short course certificate diploma university

(what?) .....

Occupation: **Country of origin:** ..... **Australia:** .....

Job description:

1. Assistant / Operator / Leadership within Operational Team .....
2. Years at company? .....
3. Description of present job .....
4. Training for job .....
5. Changes in job .....
6. Career plans/ future training needs .....

Date completed ..... Interviewer: .....

Spoken communication: easy to understand some difficulty hard

would like training

(describe pronunciation, vocab., grammar, comprehension, fluency, effect on listener)

.....

.....

.....

What would you like to learn in a communications /

English course to help you in your work?
What is most important?

.....

.....

.....

.....

Reading and Writing Assessment: see attached

Assessment Outcomes / comments:

Speaking	Reading	Writing

Summary of training needs:

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

Reading Assessment **Name:** .....

A) "Safety Notice: Near Miss Report"

1. Who is the notice for?
   (all staff)

2. Who is the notice from?
   (David G.)

3. What is it about?
   (Near miss reports)

4. What does the notice say it wants staff to do?
   (give advice on any risks or near safety misses)

Any comments:

.....

.....

B) Order Sheet

Have you seen one of these before?

1. Which parts of the Order Sheet do you need to read for your job?
   (Name your section…. is it? Pre-Press; Materials; Sheeting; Printing Pass1;
   Cutting; Gluing Pass 1; Packing. Could include the Special Instructions)

2. What is the Job No?
   (Job 67186)

3. What does ML mean in the 375ML?
   (millilitres)

4. In the second section point to the Quantity of cartons. Ask the person to read the
   number.
   (120,000)

5. Point to the P35% in section 2. Ask the person to read it.
   What does % mean. *(say "percentage" mark)*

Any comments:

.....

.....

Name: .....

Writing Assessment

Write a few lines on:

- **what you did on the weekend**
  or
- **describe a problem you had with a machine**
  or
- **write a message to your supervisor:**

Ask for permission to take leave next Thursday, so you can go toyour aunt's funeral.

.....

.....

.....

.....

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Appendix 3

Evaluation Questionnaire - First Quarter WELL **December 2000**

1. Do you see any changes since starting classes?
(eg speaking more, writing more, understanding people better)

2. Do you want to continue classes in the next teaching block?
(classes from 5th February to 12th April)

3. Would you come twice a week if this were possible?
Yes No

4. Please tick what you would like to do next year.

role play		grammar (tense, prepositions etc)	
looking at videos		punctuation	
practising dialogues		spelling	
listening to tapes		handwriting	
learning more new words		alphabet	
pronunciation		letter sounds	
speaking on the telephone		speed copying	
speaking at meetings			
filling in forms			
writing short reports			
messages			
formal letters			
reading notices			
writing instructions			

5. Write anything else you would like here.

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